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DPPC Team 🏰 · May 11

Immediate Actions For Peace and Stability in Afghanistan

Updated: Jun 1

10 Recommendations to Avoid Civil War and Protect the Gains of the Past Twenty Years

This document was prepared for the U.S. Congress by the Afghanistan-U.S. Democratic Peace and Prosperity Council in consultation with senior leadership from the Parliament of Afghanistan including in the Human Rights Civil Society and Women's Affairs Committee and the Defense Committee. The future of Afghanistan's democracy, women, youth, and civil society are now threatened by a Taliban military takeover. Congress must take immediate and bold action to protect the gains of the last twenty years, protect the women and children of Afghanistan, and prevent the country from once again becoming a safe haven for terrorist groups.

1. At a Minimum, Maintain FY22 ASFF Funding at the FY21 Level of \$4.015B

- *Supports Afghan peace negotiators by signaling to the Taliban that the ANDSF will continue to have a strong force posture and cannot be easily defeated on the*

- *Maintains the ANDSF as a strong counter terrorism force and the last line of defense for the gains of the past twenty years.*
- *Afghanistan had a 5% drop in GDP last year and cannot afford to allocate any more funds to the ANDSF.*

2. Make the Rights of Women and Girls a Non-Negotiable Requirement for International Support of a Peace Agreement and Power Sharing Government

- *The women and girls of Afghanistan should not be forced to lose their rights as part of a peace agreement. The Afghan and American people, along with NATO allies, fought so hard to win and preserve these rights.*
- *If the Taliban want international recognition, and aid for a power sharing government, they must agree to maintain all rights for women and girls as they stand today and immediately open all schools for girls in territories under their control.*

3. Maintain Air Combat Support and Counter Terrorism Support through Regionally Based U.S. Air Assets

- *Taliban attempts to capture population centers in Afghanistan must be met with airstrikes from U.S. forces. As recently as October 2020, U.S. air support stopped an attempted Taliban takeover of Helmand province. Even now, amidst the troop withdrawal, U.S. airstrikes are supporting the ANDSF to thwart major Taliban offensives against several population centers.*
- *The U.S. intelligence community and the ANDSF have a close working relationship in the fight against terrorism. While the U.S. provides intelligence collection and targeting, the ANDSF conducts frontline combat operations. To maintain this strong*

counter terrorism alliance, the U.S. must continue its intelligence collection, and drone operations at current levels.

4. Maintain Pressure on Regional Countries to Compel the Taliban to Negotiate a Ceasefire and Power Sharing Agreement

- *Regional countries including Pakistan, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia maintain significant influence over the Taliban. The U.S. must work closely with these countries and others in the region to compel the Taliban back to the negotiating table and to agree to a compromise solution.*

5. Leverage the 7,000 Taliban Prisoners in Afghan Government Custody, the Taliban's status on the U.N. Terrorist Blacklist, and the Taliban's Desire for Continued Aid to Afghanistan to Secure a Compromise Solution from the Taliban

- *Two of the Taliban's primary demands at the negotiating table are the release of 7,000 of its prisoners held in Afghan government custody and the group's removal from the U.N. terrorist blacklist. The Taliban has also expressed strong interest in securing continued development and humanitarian funding for Afghanistan.*
- *The U.S. must work with the Afghan negotiators to use these points of leverage to gain concessions from the Taliban including a ceasefire and agreeing to a compromise solution.*

6. Concessions to the Taliban Must be Matched with Commitments to the ANDSF, Enabling a Carrot and Stick Approach to the intra-Afghan Peace Talks

- *Enhancing the U.S. commitment to the ANDSF and maintaining a strong ANDSF force posture will provide much needed leverage to the Afghan negotiators at the*

force posture will provide much needed leverage to the Afghan negotiators at the intra-Afghan peace talks.

7. Support Afghan Youth Through Domestic Civil Society Led Construction of Primary and Secondary Schools, and Overseas/Online University Scholarship Programs

- *Afghanistan's youth, especially girls, have benefited from a free national education system beginning in primary school and continuing through university. However, there are not enough schools and universities to accommodate all of Afghanistan's youth.*
- *Many Afghan civil society organizations have the capability to quickly and affordably design, build and transfer schools to the Ministry of Education. These groups should be empowered to take the lead on school development.*
- *More than half of the 200,000 Afghan high school students who pass the national university entrance exam do not attend university due to lack of capacity. The U.S. should increase scholarship programs, such as the Fulbright program, for qualified Afghan students to attend U.S., international, and online universities.*

8. Implement an Immediate Plan for Contractors to Continue Providing Mission Critical Equipment Maintenance and Logistics Supply to the ANDSF

- *Contractors funded and managed by CSTC-A maintain aircraft, combat ground vehicles, and provide mission critical supplies such as ammunition and fuel. The Afghan Government cannot afford, or effectively administer any of these high dollar value contracts. Without support from existing CSTC-A contractors ANDSF combat readiness will drastically deteriorate, if not collapse.*

9. Maintain an “Off-Budget” Transparent Outcomes Based Funding Approach for NDAA Appropriated Funds with Real-Time Oversight and Audit from a Joint Task Force of Members of Congress and the Afghan Parliament

- *On ground audits by the Afghan Parliament have found that corruption and non-performance of ANDSF contracts and funding administered by the Afghan Government (“On-Budget” contracts) continue to put U.S. taxpayer dollars and ANDSF combat readiness in jeopardy. “Off-Budget” contracts and funding administered by CSTC-A are working well and free from corruption, ensuring the ANDSF gets the appropriate equipment and support.*
- *The Afghan Parliament will provide real-time oversight and feedback to Congress about budgeting, procurement, spending, contract execution, and the government’s adherence to the rule of law. Congress can make funding contingent on outcomes and results of oversight.*
- *The Afghan Parliament has a mandate from Afghan voters to represent their interests in government and promote government reform initiatives.*

10. Provide Immediate Relief for Afghan Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) Applicants that Were Employed by or on Behalf of U.S. Forces

- *Many Afghan citizens have risked their lives to support U.S. and coalition troops on the battlefield. Now, these brave men and women and their families face threats of violence and retribution from the Taliban and other terrorist groups. Thousands of SIV applicants are stranded in Afghanistan, forced to overcome bureaucratic hurdles and endure a very lengthy waiting period. SIV applications should be prioritized and streamlined to eliminate delays and avoid further loss of life.*



DPPC Team 🇺🇸 • May 24

Afghan Parliament Defense Committee Press Release



The National Assembly of Afghanistan

Wolesi Jirga

The Defense and Territorial Integrity Committee

Press Release About the U.S. and NATO Forces Withdrawal from Afghanistan

Date: 05/17/2021 - (1400/2/27)

The U.S. and NATO troop withdrawal decision from Afghanistan has made the headlines and was accompanied by reactions from various political and social segments of Afghan society. In 2012, the United States and its allies signed a security agreement with the Afghan government to demonstrate their long-term commitment to a peaceful, stable Afghanistan and to ensure that the country doesn't become a safe haven for terrorists again. The security agreement stipulates that the U.S. and NATO would support, train, and equip the ANDSF until the Afghan forces are prepared to take the full security responsibility of their country. While we believe in the capabilities, bravery, and sacrifices of the ANDSF to neutralize the security threats, the withdrawal of international forces under the current state of affairs and where the ANDSF stands is a matter of concern. Without assessing the security situation, such a withdrawal would prolong the war and negatively impact regional security, and particularly the peace process.

This committee respects the withdrawal decision. However, to secure peace and stability in Afghanistan, we state the following:

1. Just as the U.S. presence in Afghanistan was based on a mutual understanding between the Afghan government and the U.S.-led coalition and its mission was carried out responsibly, we maintain the same should be true about the withdrawal.
2. We respect the U.S. and NATO troop withdrawal; however, prior to withdrawal implementation, we expect that the US and NATO assess the security situation in Afghanistan based on the security agreement signed between the Afghan and US governments.
3. Given the vulnerability and fragility Afghanistan faces, the threat of terrorism remains

to be an ongoing challenge. The ANDSF can cope with such threats. Therefore the international community, based on the commitments it has made with the Afghan government, should fully cooperate and support the ANDSF in the fight against terrorism.

4. We ask our international allies to continue to help ANDSF with training, intelligence, air support, equipment, and maintenance in a consistent manner.
5. Based on the U.S. and Taliban agreement, the Afghan government freed five thousand Taliban prisoners, but there is no guarantee that the released prisoners will not return to the battlefield. The Afghan people want the US to be committed to Afghanistan and pressure the Taliban to reduce violence.
6. We believe that the gains made over the last 20 years must be protected, especially women's rights. The ANDSF can defend the hard-won gains, the territorial integrity of the country, and the Afghan people if it receives financial and technical aid from the U.S. and international allies.
7. We call on parties involved in the Afghan conflict to set aside their differences, come together to build a consensus, and get unified to work for long-lasting peace in Afghanistan.

**WJ Defense Committee Press Release.pdf**

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DPPC Team  · Jun 7

Peace Process Update

Nearly Half of the U.S. Troop Withdrawal is Complete; Full Withdrawal planned in July; The Taliban Intensify Violence Amid The Uncertain Fate of the Peace Talks; Speaker Mir Rahman Rahmani Visits Pakistan to Build Regional Consensus

According to U.S. military officials, American and NATO troops are expected to be completely withdrawn from Afghanistan by mid-July, nearly two months ahead of the originally planned September 11th target. U.S. Central Command said in a statement this week that nearly half of U.S. troops have withdrawn.

Emboldened by the rapid withdrawal of international forces, the Taliban have intensified their violence against the Afghan military and civilians. There has been a huge spike in bombings and clashes with the Afghan military in the past month. The insurgent group has captured four districts in three different provinces, but the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) are contesting those areas. On the diplomatic front, the intra-Afghan talks are no closer to reaching a political settlement. According to VOA news, the peace negotiations are set to resume this week in Doha, but no details have been released. The Taliban announced they will attend the Istanbul summit but requested that it be a short low-level meeting where no substantives issues are discussed. Amid the speculation that the U.S. is seeking support from neighboring countries to establish a base of operations, the Taliban issued a statement calling on Afghanistan's neighbors not to allow the presence of a U.S. military base. "God forbid such a step is taken, it will be a great historic mistake and disgrace, its shame will go in history," said the statement. "As we have repeatedly assured

others our soil will not be used against anyone's security, we urge others not to use its soil and airspace against our country."

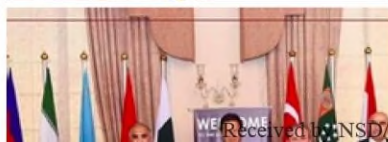
Having denounced the Biden administration's decision to withdraw troops after the May 1st deadline agreed to by the Trump administration, the insurgent group has publicly said that it will not attend any peace talks until all foreign troops have left the country. In private, however, the Taliban reportedly demanded two major concessions in order to resume any substantive peace-related talks: the release of around 7,000 Taliban prisoners from Afghan jails and the removal of their leaders from the U.S. and U.N. sanctions lists, arguing that the U.S. pledged to deliver on these commitments in the February 2020 pact with the insurgent group.

At the same time concerns grow that the ANDSF will not be able to defend their country without continued support from the U.S. in the aftermath of the troop withdrawal. Currently, the Afghan military, particularly the Afghan Air Force remains largely dependent on the U.S. for maintenance and training, as well as combat air support when the forces come under attack. But, the U.S. special envoy to Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad told a House hearing this week that it would be overly pessimistic to think that the Afghan government or ANDSF will be immediately overrun by the Taliban once the U.S.-led Coalition departs the country. "I personally believe that the statements that their forces will disintegrate and the Talibs will take over in short order are mistaken," he said. Khalilzad was responding to the doubts of many Congress members who expressed deep concerns that President Joe Biden's decision to fully withdraw by September will lead to chaos and intensified civil war.

The top U.S. commander for the Middle East, Gen. Frank McKenzie, said that the Afghan military has a "fighting chance" to be successful and to defend their country once the U.S. leaves. "It's time for the Afghan military to stand up and show that they can fight alone," declared McKenzie. "I think it's going to be a very taxing time for them. I think certainly there

is a path for them to preserve what they have now. The risk is high. I don't want to minimize that." Gen. McKenzie also stated that he would make recommendations to Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin in early June about how to monitor and fight terrorist groups in Afghanistan from outside its borders after the departure of all American troops.

Meanwhile, the Speaker of the Parliament, Mir Rahman Rahmani, visited Pakistan to attend a two-day conference of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Economic Cooperation Organization (PAECO). During his visit, Speaker Rahmani met with several high-ranking Pakistani government officials, Speaker of the Turkish Parliament, Chairman of National Assembly of Azerbaijan, and other regional leaders to discuss regional security issues, the Afghan peace process, and enhancement of economic, trade, and transit ties. As a great sign of achievement for the country, Afghanistan officially became a permanent member of PAECO with the Speaker signing the charter.





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DPPC Team 🏠 • Jun 28

Female Gen Z Influencers Show the World a New Side of Afghanistan

A group of young women in Afghanistan is breaking through as Gen Z influencers on Tik Tok, Instagram, and YouTube. Like social media influencers in other countries, these Afghan women, primarily in their 20's, have gained the attention of large groups of followers by chronicling their daily lives on digital platforms. One of the country's social media stars, Ayeda Shadab, has nearly 400,000 followers on Tik Tok and more than 230,000 on Instagram.

The rise of social media influencers in Afghanistan points to broader societal changes and technological advances being ushered in by the young generation that came of age over the past twenty years. The proliferation of mobile devices, social media, and e-commerce is fostering free speech, and entrepreneurship, while connecting Afghans to each other and the world in ways that were not possible before. According to [Business Insider](#) these female influencers, referred to as tastemakers because of their impact on the fashion and lifestyle industries, have monetized their social media presence and are inspiring enterprising Afghan business owners to follow suit. A recent [survey](#) by the Asia Foundation showed that in 2015, only 25 percent of households could get online using a mobile phone with internet access, but that number nearly doubled in 2019.

Gen Z in Afghanistan is digital natives that harness the power of technology to show the world a side of the country that is overlooked by mainstream media. Media reports about

World a side of the country that is overlooked by mainstream media. Media reports about the country focus on violence and war. Indeed female social media influencers face threats of violence and an overall deteriorating security situation. But despite these challenges, the young digital ambassadors share messages of peace, passion, and prosperity. Social media offers women opportunities for expression and political engagement, empowering them to seek better treatment and rights in society by questioning the traditional roles of gender and patriarchy.

Recently, the power of female political influence through social media came into full view after Kabul's Ministry of Education issued an ill-conceived order that called the government's commitment to women and girls' rights into question. The order declared that girls over the age of 12 are no longer allowed to attend choir classes or sing at public events. This order was quickly revoked after many Afghan women, and social rights activists became outraged on social media. They were successful in overturning the government's policy through a social media campaign with the hashtag [#IamMySong](#), accompanied by video clips of girls singing hymns and songs, and participating in musical performances.

With the U.S. and NATO forces determined to carry out an unconditional troop withdrawal from the country by September 11, the fate of women's gains and free speech outlets like social media hang in the balance. The Taliban already declared victory and do not seem to be interested in continuing the peace talks. They have changed little if any when it comes to women's rights and other personal freedoms. What will the future hold for Afghan women? Will a Taliban-dominated government allow the use of social media for anyone, let alone women. These are questions that hang in the balance as international troops withdraw and the Afghan people are left facing an uncertain future.





DPPC Team 🏠 · Aug 13

DPPC: The U.S. Must Lead on Sanctions Against the Taliban and its Leadership

Updated: 4 days ago

The Afghanistan-U.S. Democratic Peace and Prosperity Council (DPPC) is calling on the Biden Administration to lead an effort in the United Nations to expand sanctions against the Taliban's political organization and its leadership in response to war crimes. While atrocities are not new for the Taliban, recent reports have emerged in Afghanistan of assassinations as well as the execution of prisoners who have surrendered, showing the Taliban has no desire for peace or respect for the Geneva Convention.

"What the Taliban craves is recognition by the international community," said Martin Rahmani, Executive Director of the DPPC. "Afghanistan is not lost, but the Taliban is preparing to take over and they will face the challenge of governance – they know how much international support is needed to hold the country together. The international community must deny them legitimacy for the war crimes they have committed."

While the Biden Administration is resolved in leaving Afghanistan, it still can lead within international institutions. The Taliban will not respect its calls for peace without a show of force. If the Biden Administration does not want to use the American military, it can put the full weight of its diplomatic power behind an extensive sanctions regime to freeze out the Taliban.

Without the U.S. to lead on sanctions, other nations will move to recognize the Taliban in efforts to stem an inevitable refugee crisis. This would be an absolute failing of the U.S. and the international community.

Recent reports of atrocities by the Taliban include:

- *CBS News*: [The Taliban may be executing Afghan troops who surrender, U.S. Embassy says](#)
- *The Wall Street Journal*: [Afghans Tell of Executions, Forced Marriages in Taliban-Held Areas](#)
- *Human Rights Watch*: [The Taliban have reportedly killed some detainees, including relatives of provincial government officials and members of the police and army](#)
- *The Hill*: [Over two dozen killed in Afghanistan after bomb explodes near school](#)
- *Human Rights Watch*: [Afghanistan: Civilians Targeted Amid Peace Talks](#)
- *Reuters*: [Twenty-eight civilians killed in northern Afghan province as fighting intensifies](#)
- *Reuters*: [Taliban kill Afghan radio station manager, kidnap journalist - officials](#)

Intensifies

- *Reuters:* [Taliban kill Afghan radio station manager, kidnap journalist - officials](#)
- *Human Rights Watch:* [Afghanistan: Taliban Forcibly Displace Civilians](#)



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**DPPC Statement on
Reports of Unconditional...**



**Immediate Actions For
Peace and Stability in...**

DPPC Team  · 6 days ago

DPPC RECOMMENDATIONS TO EVACUATE VULNERABLE AFGHANS

WASHINGTON — The Afghanistan-U.S. Democratic Peace & Prosperity Council released a set of five recommendations on Tuesday that the Biden administration must take to ensure a safe and thorough evacuation of vulnerable Afghans.

The recommendations include:

1. The 82nd Airborne has taken control of Kabul International Airport (KIA), and it needs to maintain control of the airport and airspace until all vulnerable Afghans have been evacuated out of the country.
2. KIA has the capacity to house tens of thousands of people, it must be immediately converted into a temporary housing facility for Afghans waiting to flee the country.
3. The US needs to work with international NGOs to ensure that KIA does not turn into a humanitarian disaster. There are more than 1,000,000 displaced persons in Kabul already.
4. **Evacuation must be prioritized for those most vulnerable to violent reprisal by the Taliban including all SIV's, IV's and refugees. This includes:**

• **Approved for Release by NSD/FARA Registration Unit - 09/02/2021 11:17:18 AM**